

JUDICIAL SELECTION COMMISSION

Good evening. Senator Formica, Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Representative Ziobron, and Members of the General Government A Subcommittee: I am Ann Gimmartino, Manager of the Judicial Selection Commission, and I submit this testimony on behalf of Robert Bello, Chairperson of the Judicial Selection Commission. Thank you for the opportunity to present written testimony before you this evening.

The Commission consists of twelve members who are each appointed to a 3-year term. The Judicial Selection Commission's purpose and mission is to evaluate, investigate, and recommend qualified candidates for consideration by the Governor for nomination as judges for our three courts, the Superior Court, the Appellate Court, and the Supreme Court. The Commission also evaluates incumbent judges who seek reappointment to the same court and elevation to a higher court.

We have received the Governor's budget. The Commission cannot predict its volume of applicants, but the trend is upward as is reflected in the numbers reported in the Commission's annual reports. There are approximately 30,000 licensed attorneys in Connecticut who are eligible to apply for judicial appointment, and there are over 100 judges who may apply for reappointment or elevation during their tenure. Day to day, there is a fluidity to the volume of applications that the Commission receives, and it has been increasing over the years. However, the level of funding can decrease as we know, and the level of staffing has not kept pace with this increase in volume, but has remained the same.

The Commission members have full-time jobs aside from their Commission duties. As such, there is an unpredictability day to day in the number of members who are available to attend meetings.

The increase in work volume, combined with the unpredictability of the schedules of members, judges, and applicants make it of the utmost importance to have staff available every day to deal with these variables. The Commission currently has one staff member. The Commission needs additional staffing to better respond, and in a timely way, to these daily changes. Having an additional staff member would help the Judicial Selection Commission to ensure a continuity in services for its constituency. At this time, there is no back-up for the Commission's one staff member.

Programmatic Impact: *A reduced appropriation results in an increase in backlog or wait time for the judges and applicants and a reduction in the number of meetings.*

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- **FY 2015 – The legislative appropriation was \$ 88,956. Personal Services: \$ 73,033 and Other Expenses: \$ 16,923.** When the allotment was decreased, spending was reviewed, and the agency planned carefully and managed to not have a deficiency and remained compliant with its statutory requirements.
- **FY 2016 – The legislative appropriation was \$ 88,825. Personal Services: \$ 73,399 and Other Expenses: \$ 15,426. During the fiscal year, the JSC submitted a 2 ½% budget reduction, and OPM reduced our budget by \$ 1,500 during the fiscal year.** The agency did its best to plan again and managed to not have a deficiency and remained compliant with its statutory requirements.
- **FY 2017 – The legislative appropriation was \$ 84,636. Personal Services: \$ 75,753 and Other Expenses: \$ 8,883 (more than a 50% cut - a decrease of \$ 6,543). The reduced operating budget proposed is \$ 76,172 down from \$ 84,636 originally provided. Personal Services: \$75,753 and Other Expenses: \$ 419. Additional cuts:** At first there were holdbacks by OPM in the amount of \$ 2,539. **Just with the \$ 2,539 in holdbacks alone, the DAS Business Office has projected a deficiency for the JSC in the amount of \$ 3,033. With the additional cuts, it would only leave the JSC with \$ 419 in other expenses (or 5% of its original budget for other expenses) to cover all of the the operating expenses to run the JSC’s program for the entire year for the judges and attorneys we serve. In addition, the Conn. General Statute 51-44a, states that our twelve Commissioners shall be reimbursed for any necessary expenses incurred in the performance of their duties.**

Final Impact: FY 2018

There is only one staff member at the Judicial Selection Commission which means that cuts that are made are not coming out of the JSC’s personal services, but rather are coming out of the JSC’s other expenses. The most recent 10% budget cut has taken its toll and has had a severe impact on the JSC’s program by reducing its operating expenses by 95% to only 5% of its original allotment or \$ 419 for the entire year. We are concerned that this cut will result in a backlog of cases, increased wait times for judges and applicants, and a reduction in the number of meetings, and will make it much more difficult to process applications and interview our judges and applicants in a timely fashion. In addition, we will not be able to provide basic sustenance to our volunteer Commissioners, many of whom travel long distances to serve. It may also be more difficult to recruit volunteers to serve on the Commission. The 10% budget cut proposed will jeopardize the JSC’s compliance with Conn. General Statute 51-44a which calls for the finalization of the evaluation of all judges applying for reappointment no later than 180 days prior to the next legislative session.

